Department of State

TELEGRAM

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 IO-11 UPW-01
RSR-01 /086 W

R 221321Z SEP 7
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0281
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL FRANCE
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR 088120
REVIEWED BY Jean Sgubera DATE 1/26/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKING? ☐
DECLASSIFIED☑ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

SAIGON 15244 9/22/7

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 15244

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: UPPER HOUSE PROCLAMATION ON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

REF: SAIGON 15243

1. UPPER HOUSE SEPTEMBER 22 PASSED "PROCLAMATION" CRITICAL OF ONE-MAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND CALLING FOR ITS REORGANIZATION "ACCORDING TO ESTABLISHED DEMOCRATIC RULES." PROCLAMATION WAS GENERALLY WORDED, NOT EXPLICITLY CALLING UPON PRESIDENT EITHER TO WITHDRAW FROM RACE OR TO RESIGN AND NOT SUGGESTING ANY SPECIFIC ALTERNATIVE TO PRESENT ELECTION (TEXT REFTEL). ONLY 31 SENATORS WERE PRESENT AT SESSION, ALTHOUGH THOSE ATTENDING REPRESENTED ALL MAJOR UPPER HOUSE GROUPS. TWENTY-EIGHT VOTED IN FAVOR OF PROCLAMATION, AND THE OTHERS ABSTAINED.

2. LIVELY DEBATE PRECEDED VOTE. SENATOR VU VAN MAU BEGAN BY CALLING ONE-MAN ELECTION MEANINGLESS, UNDEMOCRATIC, AND ILLEGAL. HE ASKED THIEU TO EITHER WITHDRAW OR ACCEPT A TELEVISED DEBATE WITH OPPOSITION SENATORS. SENATOR NGUYEN VAN CHUC, WHO

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INTRODUCED PROCLAMATION THAT WAS FINALLY PASSED, ECHOED MAU'S CRITICISMS AND SAID THAT THE THIEU-HUONG SLATE SHOULD WITHDRAW TO ALLOW A NEW ELECTION. (ORIGINAL DRAFT OF CHUC'S PROCLAMATION CONTAINED PROVISION CALLING FOR SUCH WITHDRAWAL, BUT THIS SECTION WAS REMOVED BEFORE PROCLAMATION REACHED FLOOR.) SENATOR TRUONG TIEN DAT INTRODUCED RESOLUTION CALLING FOR RESIGNATION OF THIEU AND KY UNDER ARTICLE 56 OF CONSTITUTION BUT NO VOTE WAS TAKEN ON THIS PROPOSAL. SENATOR HUYNH VAN CO CRITICIZED ONE-MAN ELECTION IN MORE MODERATE TERMS, BUT CLEARLY REVEALED HIS DEVELOPING DISENCHANTMENT WITH THIEU. SENATORS DANG VAN SUNG AND TRAN THE MINH ALSO VOICED MODERATE BUT UNMISTAKABLE CRITICISMS, SUGGESTING THAT PRESIDENT THIEU SHOULD REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL NEXT MARCH AND THEN RESIGN TO ALLOW A NEW ELECTION. NONE OF THE TWELVE SENATORS WHO SPOKE DEFENDED THIEU, THOUGH DEGREE OF CRITICISM VARIED (AND SOME, LIKE LE TAN BUU, WENT OFF ON TANGENTS AGAINST PRESS CENSORSHIP ETC.).

3. COMMENT: ATTENDANCE OF ONLY 31 SENATORS WAS DUE PARTLY TO THE FACT THAT MANY ARE CURRENTLY OUT OF THE COUNTRY. SOME OTHERS PROBABLY STAYED AWAY TO AVOID VOTING ON THIS SENSITIVE ISSUE, BUT SUCH ABSENCES WERE APPARENTLY INDIVIDUAL CHOICES RATHER THAN A DECISION BY ANY GROUP.

4. ISSUANCE OF "PROCLAMATION" INSTEAD OF RESOLUTION WAS APPARENTLY INTENDED TO DRAMATIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE. SENATOR CHUC LATER COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT THIS IS ONLY THIRD OR FOURTH TIME THAT UPPER HOUSE HAS TAKEN THIS STEP.

5. GENERAL WORDING OF PROCLAMATION AND AVOIDANCE OF CALL FOR EITHER WITHDRAWAL OR RESIGNATION BY THIEU WERE A VICTORY FOR MODERATE VIEWPOINT AMONG SENATORS. WORDING PROBABLY ALSO REFLECTS REALIZATION THAT UPPER HOUSE IS POWERLESS TO ALTER THE ELECTION BY ITSELF. HOWEVER, SENTIMENT ACROSS BROAD SPECTRUM OF UPPER HOUSE OPINION CAME THROUGH UNMISTAKABLY THAT ONE-MAN ELECTION AS CURRENTLY ORGANIZED IS DEPLORED. SECTION OF PROCLAMATION CALLING FOR REORGANIZATION OF ELECTION CAN BE INTERPRETED IN SEVERAL WAYS, AND NO DOUBT THE VARIOUS PARTIES IN THE DISPUTE WILL INTERPRET IS AS EACH SEES FIT.
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